



## Introduction to Physical Activity

### Physical activity recommendations

Adults (18-64 years old) and Older Adults (65 years and over) - At least **150 minutes** (2 ½ hours) a week of **moderate-intensity** physical activity.

### What is moderate exercise?

Any type of exercise that gets your heart beating faster counts as **moderate-intensity physical activity**. The American Heart Association (AHA) adds that, when doing moderate exercise, you should be breathing harder than if you were inactive, but still be able to speak.

To know your level of intensity while you are exercising you can use the Talk Test. The chart below explains how it works.

INTENSITY LEVEL	CAN YOU TALK?
<b>LIGHT</b>	You can sing or carry on a conversation with little effort
<b>MODERATE</b>	You can speak in full sentences but cannot sing
<b>VIGOROUS</b>	You can only speak a few words at a time
<b>MAXIMUM EFFORT</b>	You can speak zero to one word at a time

### Examples of moderate-intensity cardio exercise:

- Brisk walking
- Easy jogging
- water aerobics
- swimming
- dancing (ballroom or social)
- gardening
- playing tennis with a partner
- biking slower than ten miles per hour
- raking the yard

## Benefits of Moderate Exercise

- Reduce the risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and dementia
- Improve sleep
- Better brain function (memory, focus, and processing of information)
- Help with weight loss or maintenance
- Increase bone density and improve overall bone health
- Reduce depression and anxiety symptoms and other mental health symptoms

### Plan for success:

- Discover movement that you enjoy – set one goal
- Always warm up /Cool down (end)
- Listen to your body and do what makes you comfortable
- Wear comfortable clothes and comfortable shoes

**Safety always comes first** – If you have not been active for a long time or if you have not had a medical checkup in over a year be sure to take it slow when starting an exercise routine. If you have a history of heart or lung disease, injury or pain in your joints, or if you lose your balance easily, talk to your doctor about the types of exercise you can safely do.

### Tips:

- Swing your arms while walking can help increase your heart rate.
- Use your tools to track progress (Tracker, App, journal, or another device of choice)

### Activity:

1. Establish your baseline:
  - Using your tracker or your journal, identify how many minutes of physical activity you currently get in a typical day
2. Identify: How many more minutes do you need to reach the recommended 150 minutes per week?
3. Pick an exercise you want to incorporate into your weekly physical activity that will help you reach the recommendation.
  - Examples:
    - Join a water aerobics class
    - Add brisk walking twice a week for 20-30 minutes
    - Find dance fitness videos online with music you enjoy or see the free resource page for free videos)
4. Remember to track the intensity of your exercise using the Talk Test. Moderate-level activity is where you can talk but not sing.

**Goal** – Track your physical activities.



## Healthy and Nutritious Meals

### Healthy Eating

Eating a healthy diet is not about food restrictions and limitations, staying unrealistically thin, or depriving yourself of the foods you love. Rather, it's about feeling great, having more energy, improving your health, and boosting your mood.

The focus of a healthy diet should be to replace processed food with real food whenever possible. Eating whole food as close as possible to the way nature made it. By following the following simple tips, you can stay on track and learn how to create—and stick to—a tasty, varied, and nutritious diet that is as good for your mind as it is for your body.

Eating enough fruits and vegetables can be hard, but here are some tips that can help:

- Keep whole fruit such as oranges, bananas, and apples available for healthy snacks.
- Focus on fresh fruit and vegetables and whole food.
- Use the “Healthy Eating Plate” method (see link for culturally relevant plate method) <https://institute.org/health-care/services/diabetes-care/healthyplates/>
- Shop Smart
  - What's in season and on sale
  - Make a list and stick to it
  - Shop the outside of the store first – that's where the fresh foods are (meats, dairy, fruits, vegetables, etc.). Avoid spending too much time in the inside aisles of the store - that's where the processed food is.
  - Visit your nearest food pantry before going to the grocery store. Because you may not know what the pantry has before you go, you can fill in the gaps at the store later.
- Switch your mindset
  - When thinking about what you will prepare, rather than focusing on the protein (chicken, beef, fish), focus on the vegetable that you will eat and build your meal around that.
  - When eating out, check if there are meal options that include vegetables as part of the dish or as sides.
  - Keep vegetables that can be used in a salad or frozen vegetables that you can quickly heat up available so that you can add a healthy side to a takeout meal.
  - You don't have to finish everything on your plate! Listen to your body's cues that you are full and save the rest to enjoy later.

Here are some suggestions for adding fruits and vegetables to your meals:

**BREAKFAST:**

- Try a smoothie with low-fat milk or plant-based milk, your favorite fruit, and yogurt with no sugar.
- Prepare an omelet with tomatoes, spinach, bell peppers, avocado, etc.
- Prepare instant oatmeal, or steel-cut oats, with reduced-fat milk and serve with any fruit (e.g., apples, banana), sprinkle cinnamon, and add walnuts or dried cranberries.

**LUNCH:** Prepare meals with a variety of vegetables, e.g., soups, sandwiches, veggie wraps, casserole, etc.

**DINNER:** Add vegetables to your family's recipes, salad, and make fruit your dessert

Need additional inspiration? Check out these resources for healthy recipes and tips:

- For all: <https://recipes.heart.org/>
- For those with diabetes: <https://www.diabetesfoodhub.org/>

**Tips:**

- Don't be afraid to ask if you have special dietary needs because of a medical condition. You should feel welcome to ask if they have the foods you need (do they carry lactose-free milk? Gluten-free pasta?)
- Experiment with new flavors, spices, herbs, etc.
- When possible, keep convenient fruits and vegetables available that you can add to your meals, snacks, and desserts, such as baby carrots, blueberries, frozen fruits, and vegetables. If using canned, be sure to check the label and rinse before using.

**Activity:**

1. Try at least one way to add a fruit or vegetable to your meal.
  - a. Use the suggestions above or try a new recipe.
2. If you want to challenge yourself some more, add a fruit or vegetable to one meal or snack every day of the week.

**Goal** – Track your fruit and vegetable consumption for the week.



## Water and Reducing Sugary Drinks

### Benefits of Drinking Water:

- Gets rid of wastes through urination, perspiration, and bowel movements
- Keeps your temperature normal
- Lubricates and cushions joints
- Protects sensitive tissues
- Lack of water can lead to dehydration

### Tips for drinking more water and less sugary drinks:

- **Flavor it** -Add fruit to your water: lemons, limes, and oranges. Cucumbers, watermelon, strawberries, and herbs are also delicious options. Make a pitcher so you can sip on it throughout the day.
- **Drink flavored carbonated or seltzer water**– If you like to drink sodas switch to seltzer water so that you can still enjoy the fizz without the extra sugar and calories. To help wean yourself off soda, you can water it down with plain seltzer.
- **Make iced herbal tea** –Hibiscus or berry-flavored teas are low-calorie but taste sweet. Brew a large pot of tea, cool it down, and keep it in a pitcher in the fridge to calm a juice/sugar craving. You can also try this with ginger, peppermint, or chamomile teas.
- **Tie it into a routine** – Drink a glass of water every time you brush your teeth, eat a meal, or use the bathroom.
- **Eat it** - Many fruits and vegetables have a high-water content, including melon, cucumbers, lettuce, and celery.

### Why Should I Be Concerned About Sugary Drinks?

People who often drink sugary drinks are more likely to face health problems, such as weight gain, obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cavities, and gout, a type of arthritis.

### Avoid Added Sugars

Sugary drinks (also categorized as sugar-sweetened beverages or “soft” drinks) refer to any beverage with added sugar or other sweeteners (high fructose corn syrup, sucrose, fruit juice concentrates, and more). This includes soda, pop, cola, tonic, fruit punch, lemonade (and other “ades”), sweetened powdered drinks, as well as sports and energy drinks.

Be aware of hidden sugars in processed foods and drinks - To identify added sugars, look at the ingredients list. Some major clues that an ingredient is an added sugar include:

- It has syrup (examples: corn syrup, rice syrup)
- The word ends in “**ose**” (examples: fructose, sucrose, maltose, dextrose)
- “Sugar” is in the name (examples: raw sugar, cane sugar, brown sugar, confectionary sugar)
- Other examples of added sugar include fruit nectars, concentrates of juices, honey, agave, and molasses.

If these appear in the ingredients list of your favorite beverage, you are drinking a sugar-sweetened beverage.

- Cane juice
- Corn syrup
- Dextrose
- Fructose
- Fruit juice concentrates
- Fruit nectars (such as agave nectar)
- Glucose
- High fructose corn syrup
- Honey
- Malt syrup
- Maple syrup and syrup
- Molasses
- Raw sugar
- Sugar
- Sucrose
- Sugar cane

#### Examine your choices

Drink	What I Drink Now	What I Plan to Buy/Change
Iced tea	12-ounce can of lemon-flavored iced tea (144 kcals)	12-ounce home-brewed iced tea, flavored with lemon (0 kcals, ~40 mg caffeine)
Carbonated drink	20-ounce bottle of cola (240 kcals)	20-ounce seltzer water with 2 ounces 100% fruit juice (30 kcals)
Iced coffee	16-ounce vanilla iced coffee (300 kcals)	16-ounce vanilla-flavored home-brewed iced coffee with skim milk (~5 kcals)

#### Activity:

1. Identify the sugary beverages that you drink on a weekly basis.
  - Read labels to find out how much sugar and how many sources of sugar are in your beverages. Be aware of the addition of “Added Sugars” underneath Total Sugars.
  - Count the sugary drinks you have at home and those you consume on the go or when eating out.
2. Switch out at least one of those beverages with a low or zero-calorie alternative.

**Goal:** Track your water consumption throughout the week. Remember to count low-calorie beverages that are mostly water as well, such as iced herbal teas, seltzers, and waters infused with fresh fruits and/or mint/herbs.



## Meal Prep and Planning

### What is Meal Prepping?

It means preparing or batch-cooking meals, snacks, or ingredients ahead of time, to make healthy eating easier during your busier days. You can decide to make a week's worth of breakfasts, lunches, or dinners that can be easy to reheat at work or home. It forces you to plan and brainstorm your meals in advance. Knowing you have something waiting in the fridge might make you less likely to eat fast food or pass through the drive-thru for an emergency lunch or dinner.

Following are some suggestions to get you started:

#### **Step 1: Think storage**

Think about how you're going to keep everything fresh and organized- use safe, different size, microwavable containers.

#### **Step 2: Make a game plan**

Pick a day and time convenient for you to prep your meals and make it a routine or habit . Pick another day to plan and do your grocery shopping.

#### **Step 3: Pick your recipes**

Now it's time to pick your recipes and write up a shopping list. Your meals can be specific recipes or just combinations of simple proteins, whole grains, and vegetables.

### Some benefits of meal prep:

- Can help save money.
- Can ultimately save time.
- Can help with weight control, as you decide the ingredients and portions served.
- Can contribute to an overall more nutritionally balanced diet.
- Can reduce stress as you avoid last-minute decisions about what to eat, or rushed preparation.

### Other tips:

- Discuss with your family what types of foods and favorite meals they like to eat.
- Pick the number and variety of meals to prep that includes vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains – foods that contain a variety of vitamins and minerals that will benefit your body.
- Batch cook and freeze meals
- Start simple - choose recipes that are easy to make and do not have many ingredients or complicated steps.
- Consider meals where you can reuse ingredients. For example, make a batch of baked chicken, and then serve it one day with steamed broccoli and a sweet potato, and another day shredded in tacos or on a salad.
- Research recipes that can be cooked in a slow cooker or pressure cooker to save even more time.
- Avoid cooking the same meals in a row

See this link for more resources: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/meal-prep/>

#### **Activity:**

1. Using what you have learned about adding fruits and vegetables to your meals and avoiding added sugars, attempt to prepare healthy meals at home in advance to avoid eating fast food or take-out.

**Goal:** Track progress with fruit, vegetable, and water consumption. Don't forget to keep up your moderate-level physical activity as well!





## Types of Exercises – Endurance, Strength, Balance, and Flexibility

- **Endurance activities** (aerobic) help increase your breathing and heart rate. These activities help keep you healthy, improve your fitness, and help you perform the tasks you need to do every day. Endurance exercises improve the health of your heart, lungs, and circulatory system. They also can delay or prevent many diseases that are common in older adults such as diabetes, colon and breast cancers, heart disease, and others. Physical activities that build endurance include brisk walking, dancing, swimming, climbing stairs, etc.
- **Strength (resistance training)**- Strong muscles help you stay independent and make everyday activities feel easier, like getting up from a chair, climbing stairs, and carrying groceries. Keeping your muscles strong can help with your balance and prevent falls and fall-related injuries. Start using light weights, resistance bands, or stretchy elastic bands at least 2 days per week, but don't exercise the same muscle group 2 days in a row. Below are a few examples of strength exercises:

- **Wall push-ups**



- **Arm curls**

- <https://www.womenshealthmag.com/fitness/a20702885/arm-toning-exercises/>

- **Lifting weights**

- **Balance exercises** help prevent falls and improve your balance. Balance exercises include yoga, standing on one foot – see link for more exercises: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/multimedia/balance-exercises/sls-20076853>

- **Flexibility** or stretching can improve your flexibility. Moving more freely will make it easier for you to reach down to tie your shoes or look over your shoulder when you back your car out of the driveway. Flexibility exercises include Back-stretch ankle stretch  
[Back Stretch for Older Adults - YouTube](#)

**Remember** - There is strong scientific evidence that says frequent moderate- to vigorous-intensity exercise during the week plays a significant preventative role in cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and some cancers.

**Tips:**

As you increase your fitness level, keep these tips in mind:

- **Build up gradually:** As your stamina improves, gradually increase the amount of time you exercise. Work your way up to 30 to 60 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
- **Break things up if you have to:** You don't have to do all your exercise at one time, break it throughout your day. Shorter but more-frequent sessions have aerobic benefits, too. Exercising in short sessions a few times a day may fit into your schedule better than a single 30-minute session. Any amount of activity is better than none at all.
- **Be creative:** Include various activities, such as walking, hiking, bicycling, or swimming. But don't stop there. Take a weekend hike with your family or take a line dancing class. Find activities you enjoy adding to your fitness routine.
- **Listen to your body:** If you feel pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, or nausea, take a break. You may be pushing yourself too hard.
- **Be flexible.** Give yourself permission to take a day or two of rest.

Source: Mayo Clinic, retrieved, January 17, 2023

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/fitness/art-20048269>

**Activity:** Take advantage of the Greenway System, free classes, fitness apps, gym memberships, and other ways to be active.

1. Based on your goals and access, determine which fitness option works best for you.
2. Make a plan and write it down. Figure out how many times you can realistically exercise each week, and plan ahead for which days and times you'll do it.
3. Find a class you love. Take some time to explore what classes are offered and find one you love. Whether it's Zumba, swimming, or spinning, there's sure to be something that makes you feel great or an instructor that you find especially encouraging.
4. Explore mobile fitness apps and search for the types of exercises that involve endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility.
5. Don't overdo it. Everyone has their limits, and if you're just starting a new fitness regimen, you'll need to find yours. Give yourself rest days when you need it- injuring yourself will only set you back.

**Goal:** Track progress with your fitness app, journal, or smartwatch.



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## Good Fats vs Bad Fats

**Fats 101**– Rather than adopting a low-fat diet, it’s more important to focus on **eating beneficial “good” fats and avoiding harmful “bad” fats**. Fat is an important part of a healthy diet. Choose foods with “good” unsaturated fats, limit foods high in saturated fat, and **avoid “bad” trans-fat**.

Food that nourishes you have the power to give you your life back and be more engaged in your life’s purpose and vision. Healthy foods, like good fats, bring nourishing and beauty to your body.

**Good fats: Unsaturated fats** lower total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol) while increasing HDL cholesterol (the good cholesterol). Nuts including peanuts, walnuts, almonds and pistachios, avocado, canola, and olive oil are high in unsaturated fats, and oily fish such as salmon and canned tuna, **are excellent sources of unsaturated fat**. These fats have also been found to help in weight loss, particularly body fat.

The body cannot produce omega-3 (“good fat”) or omega-6 fatty acids (see “bad fats”). Omega-3 is an essential fatty acid found in egg yolk and cold-water fish like tuna, salmon, mackerel, cod, crab, shrimp, and oyster. Omega-3 fatty acids promote a healthy immune system and help protect against heart disease and many other diseases



Good fats are essential to give your body energy and to support cell growth. They also help protect your organs and keep your body warm.

### **Fats to Avoid:**

Saturated fats are “bad fats” because they increase levels of LDL (low-density lipoprotein), the “bad” cholesterol which leads to atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease.

Examples of products high in saturated fats include margarine, sunflower, and safflower oils, corn oil, cotton seed oil, and mixed vegetable oils, products made with refined soybean oil and all products with any partially hydrogenated oils

### **Read more on fats:**

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2012/06/21/ask-the-expert-healthy-fats/#good-fats>

**Tips:** Cook with healthy oils. Olive, canola, soy, peanut, sunflower, corn, and other oils from plants are the best choices since they are high in healthy unsaturated fat.

## **Fats and Fiber**

Fiber lowers the risk of developing various conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, diverticular disease, and constipation. Fiber's beneficial role in the gut microbiome may produce anti-inflammatory effects that alleviate the chronic inflammation associated with heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, colorectal cancer, constipation, and Diverticular disease (IWCIM, 2021).

### **Looking to add more fiber to your diet?**

Fiber, along with adequate fluid moves quickly and relatively easily through your digestive tract and helps it function properly. Fiber, found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, is best known for its ability to prevent or relieve constipation. Foods containing fiber can provide other health benefits, such as helping to maintain a healthy weight and lowering your risk of diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer.

### **Some tips for increasing fiber intake:**

- Eat whole fruits instead of drinking fruit juices.
- Replace white rice, bread, and pasta with whole-grain food such as brown rice, oatmeal, and whole-grain bread.
- For breakfast, choose cereals that have a whole grain as their first ingredient. Another tip is to look on the Nutritional facts label and choose cereals with 20% or higher of the Daily Value (DV) for fiber.
- Snack on crunchy raw vegetables or a handful of almonds, nuts, seeds instead of chips and crackers.
- Snack on fruits, such as apples or pears, make great snacks because they're tasty and portable
- Substitute beans or legumes for meat two to three times a week in chili and soups.
- Swap bread, tortillas, and rolls for whole grains.
- **Remember, always talk to your primary care physician if you have any health condition that recommends avoiding fiber, e.g., diverticulitis.**

When buying packaged foods, check the Nutrition Facts label for fiber content. It can vary among brands.

**Activity:**

1. Use the plate method and focus on whole foods and good fats.
2. Visit the following link to learn more about FATS and click on the “RECIPES” tab to try one of the recipes or share a recipe that limits saturated fat and focuses on lean meats, e.g., turkey, and fatty fish like tuna, salmon, and sardines
3. Experiment with new grains, such as quinoa, millet, farro, and barley

**Goal:** Track activities and add good fats and fiber into your meals and snacks.



## Understanding Food Labels

Nutrition food labels provide information regarding energy (calories), fat, protein, Carbohydrates, fiber content, type of fat, and vitamin and mineral content. Research whether foods are highly processed or not.

Source: [Understanding Food Labels | The Nutrition Source | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#)

Another way to use the nutrition label is to use the Nutrition Facts label together with the **My Plate** which can help you figure out how many calories you need each day. It can help you picture recommended portion sizes for vegetables, fruits, grains, protein foods, and dairy products that your body needs to maintain a healthy weight.

Visit [MyPlate | U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) and explore this method.

**Serving size** - A single serving and the total number of servings per container (package).

1. **Calories per serving** - How many calories you're really consuming if you eat the whole package.
2. **Nutrients** - Limit the amounts of added sugars, saturated fat and sodium, and avoid trans-fat.
3. **Nutrients your body needs** - Calcium, choline, dietary fiber, iron, magnesium, potassium, and vitamins A, C, D and E.
4. **Understand % Daily Value** - The percentage of each nutrient in a single serving, in terms of the daily recommended amount. If you want to consume less of a nutrient (such as saturated fat or sodium), choose foods with a lower % DV (5 percent or less). If you want to consume more of a nutrient (such as fiber), choose foods with a higher % DV (20 percent or more).

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup (55g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Source: <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/understanding-food-nutrition-labels>

## What should I eat?

### Tips:

- Be aware of the addition of “Added Sugars” underneath Total Sugars and Saturated fats.
- Choose healthy carbs. Whole grains are your best bet.
- Pay attention to the protein package. Fish, poultry, nuts, and beans are the best choices.
- Choose foods with healthy fats, limit foods high in saturated fat, and avoid foods with trans-fat. Plant oils, nuts, and fish are the healthiest sources.
- Choose a fiber-filled diet, rich in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.
- Eat more vegetables and fruits. Go for color and variety—dark green, yellow, orange, and red.
- Eating less salt is good for everyone’s health. Choose more fresh foods and fewer processed foods.

### Activity:

1. When shopping- look at labels and share an item that you eliminated from your pantry.
2. Swap one can product for a fresh one e.g., can beans for fresh beans
3. Visit the link and learn more about nutrition labels:  
[Interactive Nutrition Facts Label \(fda.gov\)](https://www.fda.gov/food/interactive-nutrition-facts-label)

**Goal:** Track your activities and fiber consumption for the week





## Pause, Assess, and Recalibrate

**Congratulations!** You have made progress in setting goals for your success.

You have made incredible progress – you are eating foods that heal, moving your body, and making healthier choices!

Now it's time to pause, assess, and recalibrate (review goals, the reason for doing this and what challenges have presented, and how you overcame them).

First, let's celebrate where you are today.

Reflect on any setbacks or challenges you had, explore what happened and what helped you overcome them.

Sometimes we just need to remind ourselves of why we started a health and fitness program.

- How will it improve your life for the better?
- How will it make you feel?

Behavior change takes time, patience, and persistence. Learn what you can from the short-term setback, then let it go. Start fresh today, and use the following tips to get yourself back on-track with your goals:

- First, start your day with gratitude – Feeling thankful first thing in the morning helps prepare your brain for positivity and energy for the rest of the day.
- Choose to trust God in every circumstance.
- Mindset matters – Mindful breathing reminds us to slow down and think about our choices, whether it's about our food, our fitness, or our goals.

Self-compassion is at the heart of the health journey. The three Facets of Self-Compassion:

1. **Mindfulness:** Having an open, curious, non-judging attitude; not over-identifying with negative stories about the self.

2. **Self-kindness:** Treating yourself kindly, rather than harshly. Extending the same care and support to yourself that you would to a good friend or loved one.

3. **Common humanity:** Allowing yourself to be human, to make mistakes and learn from them. Knowing that as humans we are not perfect, nor should we be expected to act flawlessly.

**Remember:** Microsteps are small, science-backed steps you can take to build habits that significantly improve your life. With minimal time and effort, you can seamlessly integrate Microsteps into your days, and start seeing immediate benefits for your well-being, resilience, focus, relationships, and sense of purpose. They're small — even tiny — but the results add up.

Source: THRIVE website

**Tips:** Tips to get back on track:

- Revisit your reason.
- Write it down, paste it to your computer/fridge/mirror/vision board etc. and remind yourself daily of why you want to achieve this goal.
- Remember your past wins. Are there skills, talents, strengths you used in the past that will help you with your current goals?
- Remind yourself that you are capable of BIG things.
- Big goals are great to have but sometimes they are so big that they can be overwhelming and put a lot of pressure on yourself. Sometimes it's necessary to breakdown your big goal into small steps, to achieve the big goal.
- Make your goals easy to start, then as you achieve them you will build momentum, creating confidence in yourself and from there the motivation keeps building!
- Understand what might get in the way. What resources or information might you need to help you with your goal and have a contingency plan ?
- Get an accountability partner who has your best interests at heart, motivate you and who is nonjudgmental.
- How will you reward yourself? Something that makes you feel good, e.g., a spa day or massage.
- Think of how you will record or track progress of action steps and goals.
- Understand what's really stopping you. Write down all the reasons that's holding you to achieving your goals.
- Learn to love the journey to achieving your goals. You need to be flexible and understand that it's about consistency and progress, not perfection.

**Activity: Pick an activity of your choice.**

1. Celebrate where you are today.
2. Add another small step to your new healthy lifestyle this week.
3. Practice resilience and stress reduction practices of your choice.
4. Journal two things for which you are grateful.
5. Send a thank you letter to someone you appreciate.
6. Negative thoughts – journal about negative thoughts, and talk to your accountability partner, friend, or someone you trust.

**Goal:** Checking food labels for calories per serving is one step toward managing your food portions. It's also important to keep track of

- what you eat
- when you eat
- where you eat
- why you eat
- how much you eat



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## Stress Management and Self Care

### What is Stress?

According to the World Health Organization, stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way we respond to stress can make a significant difference to our overall well-being.

There are three main types of stress that may occur in our everyday lives. Many of us may experience a combination of these three types (Harvard, 2022).

- **Acute** (a brief event such as a heated argument or getting stuck in a traffic jam).
- **Acute episodic** (frequent acute events such as work deadlines).
- **Chronic stress** (persistent events like unemployment from a job loss, physical or mental abuse, substance abuse, or family conflict).

### Chronic stress can affect your mental and physical health

Stress also creates a chain reaction of behaviors that can negatively affect eating habits, leading to other health problems.

Elevated levels of cortisol may cause cravings, particularly for foods high in sugar, fat, and calories, which may then lead to weight gain.

Long-term activation of your body's stress response system, along with prolonged exposure to cortisol and other stress hormones, may put you at risk for health troubles such as:

- digestive problems
- anxiety
- headaches
- depression
- sleep problems
- weight gain
- memory and concentration issues
- heart disease and stroke
- high blood pressure

**Consider seeing a mental health professional if you experience chronic stress and it's affecting your mental and physical health.**

Resources for free and low-cost mental health resources are provided at the end of this handout.

### Reduce stress and Self Care

What is self-care? Self-care is important to maintaining a healthy relationship with yourself. It means doing things to take care of our minds, bodies, and souls by engaging in activities that promote well-being and reduce stress.

Examples include healthy eating, going for a walk, reading, getting a massage, taking a bath, taking a nap, deep breathing, and watching a movie. Maintaining healthy relationships; engaging with our spiritual and emotional selves; practicing work-life balance, and good sleep hygiene; practicing mindful/restorative/relaxation practices (prayer, meditation, breathing exercise yoga, etc.).

**Activities to Help Manage Stress** – Experts recommend the following three positive psychology activities to help manage stress:

### 1. Enjoy Nature

Research supports that spending just 20 minutes connecting with nature can help lower stress hormone levels, according to a study from *Frontiers in Psychology* (April 2014). Spending at least 20 to 30 minutes immersed in a nature setting was associated with the biggest drop in cortisol levels. So, the next time you need to de-stress or just work on your mental well-being, find a nature setting you enjoy and spend some time there.

### 2. Regular Exercise

Physical activity will help to lower blood pressure and stress hormone levels. Aerobic exercises like walking and dancing increase breathing and heart rate so that more oxygen reaches cells throughout the body. This reduces tension in muscles, including the heart.

### 3. Healthy diet

A balanced diet can support a healthy immune system. It provides the extra energy needed to cope with stressful events. Early research suggests that certain foods like omega-3 fats and vegetables may help to regulate cortisol levels. If you frequently rely on fast food because you are tired or too busy to prepare meals at home, consider meal planning, a practice that can help save time in the long run, ensure more balanced healthful meals, and prevent weight gain.

**Tips:** Figuring out how stress affects your health is an important step in dealing with it. Identify sources of stress in your life and look for ways to reduce and manage them.

Whenever you feel stressed, take slow deep breaths to reduce muscular tension, lower the heart rate, and calm the mind. Breathe slowly, focusing on each breath in and out. Through this simple act, your parasympathetic nervous system kicks in and can help you calm down.

**Activity:** Pick one activity of your choice

1. Imagine a recent stressful event. Take a few minutes to think about how you felt.

Write it down and categorize each sign, symptom, or thought:

**Psychological, Emotional, Physical, Behavioral**

2. Write in a journal how stress impacts your overall health (include how it impacts your mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, relational, and social health).
3. Pick an activity that will focus on self-care. What do you do to relax, unwind, or feel calm?

**Goal:** Practice health activities to help manage stress and find ways to cope with it.



# Resiliency and Social Support

## Resiliency and Social Support

### What is Resiliency?

*“Resiliency is our ability to positive adaptation to various life transitions, misfortunes, demands, losses, illnesses, adverse events, stressors, and pressure. It is our ability to “bounce back” while maintaining wholeness, balance, and health and ultimately optimizing our lives even in difficult and challenging times” (Herrman, 2011)*

Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make a person more resilient, such as a positive attitude, optimism, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback.

### What are strategies for becoming more resilient?

Research has shown that while some people seem to come by resilience naturally, these behaviors can also be learned. Whether you're going through a tough time now or you want to be prepared for future challenges, you can build resilience by:

- **Finding a sense of purpose** can help you find meaning in life's challenges. Set clear, achievable goals to help you look toward the future with meaning.
- **Being more confident in your own abilities**, including your ability to respond to and deal with a crisis, is a great way to build resilience for the future.
- **Developing a social network** of caring, supportive people around you acts as a protective factor during times of crisis.
- **Embracing change** and being flexible is an essential part of resilience. By learning to be more adaptable, you'll be better equipped to respond when faced with a life crisis.
- **Being optimistic and remaining hopeful and positive** about a brighter future, even during difficult times- this is an important part of resiliency. You have the skills and abilities to combat any challenges you face.
- **Nurturing yourself** by prioritizing activities that you enjoy.
- **Develop problem-solving skills** so that when encountering a new challenge, come up with some potential ways you could solve the problem
- **Establish reasonable goals** to deal with the problem.
- **Taking immediate action.** Don't ignore your problems. Instead, figure out what needs to be done, plan and take action.
- **Committing to building skills** over time and building your own existing strengths.

Source: Very well mind website - Retrieved Feb 24, 2023.

One of the most important factors is **building healthy habits**—getting enough sleep, eating well, and exercising—which can reduce stress, which may, in turn, boost resilience. Similarly, being sure to nurture close relationships can help an individual find support when trouble arises.

**Social Support** – when it comes to your health, everyone needs a buddy.

Research shows that people working and supporting each other are more likely to be successful in achieving their health goals.

Having good social relationships is tied to greater psychological and physical well-being. Thus, it's not surprising that social relationships also matter when it comes to resiliency, in part because they help us feel less stressed and supported during difficult situations.

Some people are naturally resilient, with personality traits that help them remain calm in challenging situations. However, these behaviors are not just inborn traits found in a select few. Resilience is the result of a complex series of internal and external characteristics, including genetics, physical fitness, mental health, and environment.

Large-scale population studies have shown that positive relationships at one period of life predict less depression later. Social relationships are particularly protective for older adults at risk of cognitive decline or health challenges.

Source: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0062396>

As the American Psychological Association wrote in a report: *“Many studies show that the primary factor in resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family. Relationships that create love and trust, provide role models, and offer encouragement and reassurance, help bolster a person’s resilience.”*

Resilient people also tend to have the following characteristics:

- Being a good communicator
- Having an internal locus of control
- Having high emotional intelligence and managing emotions effectively
- Holding positive views of themselves and their abilities
- Possessing the capacity to make realistic plans and stick to them
- Viewing themselves as fighters rather than victims of circumstance

### **Tips:**

1. Practicing gratitude strengthens relationships and social support networks, which aids in reducing stress and depression. Even finding purpose—which one could imagine doesn't necessarily involve building social networks—is often fostered in research studies through in-depth conversations with a caring adult.
2. Make every day meaningful. Do something that gives you a sense of accomplishment and purpose every day. Set clear, achievable goals to help you look toward the future with meaning.
3. Get connected. Building strong, positive relationships with loved ones and friends can provide you with needed support, guidance, and acceptance in good and bad times. Establish other important connections by volunteering or joining a faith or spiritual community.

**Activity:** Pick an activity of your choice

1. Think of activities you love that create excitement, fun, passion, and de-stress.
2. Make a list of strategies to remove or decrease causes of stress that you feel you have control over.
3. Identify a recent experience in which demonstrating resilience helped you overcome adversity.

**Goal:** Continue to make strong connections and build your social support network and healthy lifestyle to achieve overall health and wellness.



## Sleep and Impact on Health

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020), about one-third of American adults do not get enough sleep each night, and up to seventy million Americans have chronic sleep problems.

Sleep is as essential to our daily needs as food and water. Sleep plays a critical role in the brain as well as physical functioning. Sleep affects everything from our mood during the day to our long-term health. When you're well-rested, you feel like you can take on the day and you are more productive at work and make healthy choices, engage in physical activity, and avoid sugary drinks.

There are several reasons people may get insufficient sleep:

- Poor sleep habits (watching television or using screens late at night, drinking caffeinated or alcoholic beverages at night, not following a regular sleep schedule).
- Your sleep environment is too noisy, too light, or otherwise not conducive to sleep.
- You attempt to sleep outside of the body's natural circadian clock (working an overnight shift and trying to make up for sleep during the day).
- You have a sleep disorder, such as sleep apnea, insomnia, or periodic leg movements that reduce deep sleep or causes frequent awakenings.
- You have a medical condition such as heart, lung, or kidney disease, or chronic pain, which causes frequent awakenings.

### Risk of sleep deprivation

If you experience continued sleep deprivation, you will develop a condition called **sleep deficiency**. Sleep deficiency increases the risk of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression, and even early death. **Talk to your Dr. if you continue to have trouble sleeping.**

### How Much Sleep Do We Need?

Sleep needs change as we age, however, specific sleep amounts vary by individual. According to the National Sleep Foundation and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), adults need about 7-8 hours a day. A consensus by the AASM and Sleep Research Society recommends that adults should sleep 7 or more hours a night to promote optimal health.

### Benefits of Sleep

- Better health
- Better mood and decrease anxiety
- Better memory
- Improve daily performance
- Better sleep reduces the level of stress
- Sharper brain
- Weight control



## Tips:

Some habits that can improve your sleep health:

- Be consistent. Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning, including on the weekends.
- Remove electronic devices, such as TVs, computers, and smartphones, from the bedroom.
- Avoid large meals, caffeine, and alcohol before bedtime.
- Get some exercise. Being physically active during the day can help you fall asleep more easily at night.
- Reduce stress. The evening and bedtime hours are also a good time to perform some relaxation techniques, such as slow breathing or yoga. There are many free resources available for bedtime meditation. See the link for more resources about meditation and techniques: [Guided Meditations for Beginners From 3 Experts \(aarp.org\)](#)
- Create a comfortable sleep environment. Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark, relaxing, and at a comfortable temperature.
- Manage worries. Try to resolve your worries or concerns before bedtime. Jot down what's on your mind and then set it aside for tomorrow.
- If you can't fall asleep after 20 minutes, get up and do a relaxing activity until you feel sleepy again. Don't lie in bed awake.
- **See your health care provider if nothing you try helps.**

## Daytime tips to help you with sleep

- Keep a consistent routine. Get up at the same time every day of the week. This will help set your body's natural clock (circadian rhythm, a way our bodies regulate sleep).
- Get outside in the morning and get natural sunlight, which controls the natural body clock, therefore is recommended to get regular exposure to light in the morning for at least 20 minutes. This helps to set the body's clock each day.
- Exercise during the day helps improve your sleep quality at night, reduces stress, and improves mood.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol late in the day.

**Activity:** Track your hours of sleep for one week and assess how you are feeling. What is keeping you up at night?

Answer the question – how often do you renew your mind?

**Goal:** Consider simple tips for better sleep, from setting a sleep schedule to including physical activity in your daily routine. The goal is to achieve 7-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep.



## Healthy Brain, Healthy Body

### Healthy Brain, Healthy Body

According to an AARP article, a weakening brain is not an inevitable part of aging. It's true that the brain changes with age, but just like other parts of the body — it needs to take good care of it along the way can help prevent or delay disease and decline. (Source: <https://www.aarp.org/health/brain-health/info-2022/good-brain-habits.html>)

As we age, healthy eating can make a big difference in our health by reducing the risk of developing chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. Healthy fueling of the body also benefits brain function.

### Behaviors that can benefit the brain

**Follow a healthy diet** - As we age, healthy eating can make a big difference in our health by reducing the risk of developing chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. Healthy fueling of the body also benefits brain function. Older adults should focus on a healthy eating plan that includes fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat milk and dairy products, lean meats and seafood, and legumes, nuts, and seeds.

**Keep Your Mind Active** - Memory problems and a decline in cognitive skills can be a common part of getting older. However, there is a difference between normal memory changes and memory problems associated with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

To slow or prevent cognitive decline try to use your mind in challenging ways which can have short and long-term benefits for your brain. As the brain is used in new ways, it begins to form new pathways for connections among brain cells. Incorporating brain stimulating activities into your day can help to keep the brain active and improve memory. For example, completing puzzles and games that are challenging to you or engaging in ongoing education to learn a new topic, skill, or hobby are some examples.

**Make mental health a priority** – Those that participate in social and leisure activities that they enjoy may be at lower risk for developing mental health problems. Research has shown that connecting with others socially can benefit brain health and may possibly delay the onset of dementia. Those who engage with other people more often tend to have lower rates of death and disability. When you are involved in activities and personal connections that you find meaningful, they help provide a sense of purpose and increase mental well-being. Other ways to help improve your mental health are practicing meditation, relaxation techniques, yoga, and gratitude.

**Others include:**

- Stay socially engaged.
- Quit smoking. Evidence shows that smoking increases risk of cognitive decline. Quitting smoking can reduce that risk to levels comparable to those who have not smoked.
- Find ways to stimulate your brain.
- Manage stress.
- Stay physically active.
- Get enough sleep (aim for at least seven hours).
- Control blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

Source: Global Council on Brain Health/CDC

**Tips:**

- Take breaks during the day to move your body.
- Go for walks and enjoy God's creation.
- Take care of your heart, and your brain will follow.
- Connect with loved ones.
- Practice gratitude.

**Activity:** Journal and write what are you grateful for.

**Goal:** The goal is to stay motivated and engage in activities you enjoy. Stay connected with people that bring joy and happiness.



## Sodium

Salt, also known as sodium chloride, is used for the flavor of food and as a food preservative. The human body requires a small amount of sodium to help the body keep fluids in a normal balance. Sodium plays a key role in normal nerve and muscle function. It is estimated the body needs about 500 mg of sodium daily for vital functions. However, too much sodium in the diet can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. Most of the body's sodium is in blood and in the fluid around cells. Most Americans' diets include at least 1.5 teaspoons of salt per day, or about 3400 mg of sodium, which is much more than our bodies need.

Finely ground salts are dense and tend to contain more sodium than coarser salts. Note that sodium content can vary widely among brands, so check the Nutrition Facts label for exact amounts.

The different amounts of sodium vary according to the type of salt:

Type of Salt	Approximate amount of sodium in <b>1 teaspoon</b>
<b>Iodized table salt, fine</b>	2,300 mg
<b>Kosher salt, course</b>	1,920 mg
<b>Sea salt, fine</b>	2,120 mg
<b>Sea salt, course</b>	1,560 mg

### Sodium and Health

The body obtains sodium through food and drink and loses sodium primarily in sweat and urine. Healthy kidneys maintain a consistent level of sodium in the body by adjusting the amount excreted in the urine. When sodium consumption and loss are not in balance, the total amount of sodium in the body is affected.

As we age, the body is less able to maintain fluid and sodium balance for several reasons:

- Decreased thirst
- Kidneys may become less able to reclaim water and, more water may be excreted in the urine.

- Less fluid in the body, which can result from not eating and drinking enough fluids.
- Inability to obtain water and dependence on other people to provide them with water, as in the case of dementia.
- Drugs: Many older people take medications for high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disorders that can make the body excrete excess fluid or magnify the effects of fluid loss.

The above situations can result in losing fluid or not consuming enough fluid, therefore causing high sodium levels in the blood and/or dehydration.

### **Sodium and High Blood Pressure**

Too much sodium can lead to high blood pressure (also known as hypertension), a condition in which blood pressure remains elevated over time. Ninety percent of American adults are eating more sodium than is recommended.

Hypertension makes the heart work too hard, and the high force of the blood flow can harm arteries and organs (such as the heart, kidneys, brain, and eyes). Uncontrolled high blood pressure can raise the risk of heart attack, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, and blindness. In addition, blood pressure rises as you get older, so limiting your sodium intake becomes even more important each year.

### **Make the right choice!**

Almost any unprocessed food like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, meats, and dairy are low in sodium. Most of the salt in our diet comes from commercially prepared foods, not from salt added to cooking at home or even from salt added at the table before eating.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 40% of the sodium consumed by Americans comes from processed foods such as cold cuts and deli meat, savory snacks (e.g., chips, crackers, popcorn), pizza, canned products, etc.

Remember always to check the sodium content in the Nutrition Facts label to compare products, and don't forget to check the serving size in order to make an accurate comparison.

Source: <https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-education-resources-materials/sodium-your-diet>

### **Tips to Reduce Sodium Consumption:**

Follow these tips to reduce the amount of sodium you consume. Your "taste" for sodium will gradually decrease over time. Learning about sodium in foods and exploring new ways to prepare foods can help you achieve your sodium goal. (FDA, 2022)

1. Read the Nutrition Facts label, which shows you how much sodium is in packaged foods. Choose lower sodium foods, especially if you have high blood pressure, diabetes, or kidney disease.
2. Look for cue words, like “cured” which tend to be high in sodium. Avoid these foods in your meals, if possible.
3. Prepare your own food when you can and limit packaged sauces, mixes, and “instant” products (including flavored rice, instant noodles, and ready-made pasta).
4. Add flavor without adding sodium. Try no-salt seasoning blends, herbs, and spices instead of salt to add flavor to your food.
5. Choose fresh meat, poultry, and seafood, rather than processed varieties. Also, check the package on fresh meat and poultry to see if salt water or saline has been added.
6. Buy fresh, frozen (no sauce or seasoning), or low-sodium or no-salt-added canned vegetables.
7. Rinse sodium-containing canned foods, such as beans, tuna, and vegetables before eating.
8. Choose low-sodium or no-salt-added nuts, seeds, and snack products (such as chips and pretzels), or have carrots or celery sticks instead.
9. Make lower-sodium choices at restaurants. Ask for your meal to be prepared without table salt and request that sauces and salad dressings be served “on the side,” then use less of them. You can also ask if nutrition information is available and then choose options that are lower in sodium.

Dr. Mark Hyman recommends several pantry ingredients, including seasonings and spices like turmeric, cayenne pepper, thyme, rosemary, chili powder, cumin, sage, oregano, onion powder, cinnamon, coriander, cilantro, paprika, and parsley. Buy organic when you can and read all the labels to ensure the products don't contain hidden sugar, gluten, or other problematic additives.

If you use all these amazing, potent spices and herbs you won't add much salt to make your meals taste great. Eating food that is good for you is not about feeling deprived. If you choose the right foods and the right recipes, you can reap the benefits of a healthy lifestyle without feeling deprived.

**Activity:** Read the food label and choose lower sodium foods – especially if you have high blood pressure, diabetes, or kidney disease.

- Check your pantry for high processed foods.
- Flavor your foods with fresh or dried herbs and spices instead of salt. Pick spice blends that do not list salt or sodium on the ingredients list.

**Goal:** Reduce salt intake and eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy low in fat. When deciding what to eat or drink, choose options that are full of nutrients and limited in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.



## Chronic Disease

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that six out of ten American adults have at least one chronic disease, including cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. Furthermore, four out of ten American adults have at least two or more concurrent chronic diseases. Collectively, chronic diseases account for “the leading causes of death and disability and leading drivers of the nation’s \$4.1 trillion in annual health care costs.”

Lifestyle factors such as poor diet, smoking, alcohol consumption, and lack of exercise contribute to the incidence of chronic disease. According to the CDC, “most people in the United States don’t eat a healthy diet and consume too much sodium, saturated fat, and sugar, increasing their risk of chronic diseases.”

Chronic diseases are defined by the CDC as “conditions that last 1 year or more and require ongoing medical attention or limit activities of daily living or both.” Chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States.

Many chronic diseases are caused by the following risk behaviors:

- Tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Poor nutrition, including diets low in fruits and vegetables and high in sodium and saturated fats.
- Physical inactivity.
- Excessive alcohol use.

### Major Chronic Diseases

**Heart Disease and Stroke** are the leading risk factors for heart disease and stroke are high blood pressure, high low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, diabetes, smoking and secondhand smoke exposure, obesity, unhealthy diet, and physical inactivity.

Eating too much sodium can lead to high blood pressure. High LDL cholesterol can double a person’s risk of heart disease. Excess cholesterol can build up in the walls of arteries and limit blood flow to a person’s heart, brain, kidneys, other organs, and legs.

People can improve their blood pressure and cholesterol levels by eating a healthy diet that is low in sodium, being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight, and taking medicines as recommended.

**Cancer** is the second leading cause of death in the United States, but many kinds of cancer can be prevented or caught early. Leading risk factors for preventable cancers are smoking, getting too much ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or tanning beds, being overweight or having obesity, and drinking too much alcohol.

Melanoma is the deadliest kind of skin cancer, and the most common cancer caused by exposure to UV light from the sun or tanning beds. Although the use of sun protection has increased, and the use of tanning beds has decreased in recent years.

**Diabetes** affects more than thirty-seven million people in the United States. People with diabetes are also at higher risk of heart disease, stroke, and other serious complications like kidney failure, blindness, and amputation of a toe, foot, or leg.

Higher risk of type 2 diabetes, include those that:

- Are overweight or have obesity.
- Are age 45 or older.
- Have a parent, brother, or sister with type 2 diabetes.
- Are physically active less than 3 times a week.
- Had gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy) or gave birth to a baby who weighed more than nine pounds.
- Are an African American, Hispanic, Latino, American Indian, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, or Asian American.

Some risk factors for type 2 diabetes can't be changed, such as age and family history, but some can, such as having prediabetes, being overweight, eating unhealthy food, being inactive, and smoking.

**Prediabetes** is a serious health condition in which blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough yet to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. A person with prediabetes is at high risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. An estimated 96 million US adults—more than 1 in 3—have prediabetes, and more than 8 in 10 of them don't know they have it. (CDC, 2022).

### **Tips on how to prevent chronic disease**

Many chronic diseases are caused by key risk behaviors. By making healthy choices, you can reduce, or delay getting a chronic disease and improve your quality of life. By practicing



these four healthy behaviors, you can improve your odds of staying well, feeling good, and living longer.

**Tips:**

1. Don't smoke, and if you smoke, get the support you need to quit for good. Quitting smoking lowers your risk of heart disease, lung disease, cancer, and other smoking-related illnesses. **It's never too late to quit smoking!** Call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** to be connected to your state Quitline, where you can speak confidentially with a trained quit coach.
2. Good nutrition is essential to staying healthy at any age. The benefits of healthy eating are significant to live longer and have less risk of obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. A balanced, healthy diet includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat dairy products and limits added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium.
3. Physical activity is one of the best ways you can improve your health now and later in life. Everyone can get the health benefits of physical activity—no matter their age, abilities, shape, or size.

Adults need two kinds of physical activity:

**Aerobic physical activity**—such as brisk walking, biking, dancing, or yard work that increases your heart rate.

**Muscle-strengthening** physical activity that works all major muscle groups, such as lifting weights, working with resistance bands, push-ups, or squats.

**Activity:**

- Track your physical activity. Aim for your personal goal or follow the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity weekly (30 minutes a day).
- Try adding some strength training exercises to your routine or try a group exercise class.

**Goal:** Maintain a regular physical activity schedule to help with long-lasting behavior changes to improve overall health.



## Prep for Long Term Maintenance

Lifestyle changes are a process that takes time and requires support. Once you're ready to make a change, the difficult part is committing and following through. So, utilize the resources and make a plan that will prepare you for success. Careful planning means setting small goals and taking things one step at a time.

Research also shows that healthy lifestyle factors protect from developing chronic health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, dementia, heart disease, strokes, cancer, and more. Taking steps toward a healthier lifestyle can make a big difference in our lives, but it can be hard to change our habits. Below are a few tips to help you get started:

- Find motivation- what motivates you? **Remember the big WHY.**
- Make healthy habits a priority.
- Understand how emotions affect you and trigger emotional eating.

Deal with unexpected setbacks - Plan ahead to avoid setbacks. For example, find other ways to be active in case of bad weather, injury, or other issues that arise. Think of ways to eat healthy when traveling or dining out, like packing healthy snacks while on the road or sharing an entrée with a friend in a restaurant.

If you do have a setback, don't give up. Setbacks happen to everyone. Regroup and focus on meeting your goals again as soon as you can.

### **Tips for Long lasting behavior Change:**

- Consider reviewing the results of your Biometrics and identify why you want to be healthy or healthier:
  - Reflect on the Statement: *"I want to take care of myself so I can ..."*
  - Complete the sentence: *"I want to be healthy because....."*

### **Ways to Renew Motivation** (Coach Raven, 2023)

- Revisit your **BIG Why**
- Re-evaluate your goals
- Feeling Bored? Add variety to routine/meals
- Break down goals into smaller steps
- Be kind to yourself

- Show gratitude
- Create a positive mindset
- Just get started

### **Tips:**

Following are some tips for making lasting, positive lifestyle and behavior changes:

- Make a plan that will stick - Establishing SMART goals (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-Bound)
- Start small- break down your goals into small, manageable steps that are specifically defined and can be measured.
- Change one behavior at a time - To improve your success, focus on one goal or change at a time. As new healthy behaviors become a habit, try to add another goal that works toward the overall change you're striving for.
- Find an accountability partner - Having someone with whom to share your struggles and successes makes the work easier and the mission less intimidating.
- Ask for support - If you feel overwhelmed or unable to meet your goals on your own, consider seeking help from a health coach.
- Plan rewards for yourself at regular intervals along the way. Rewards may help you to stay on track and maintain motivation. Try to find rewards that are in line with your achievements and that help you to maintain interest when challenges arise.

**A healthy lifestyle is key to a long, healthy life, and can be attained. Success may require some thoughtful trial and error, but don't give up - you can do it!**

#### **Activity: Write in your journal to reflect about the following:**

**Reflect** on all your eating habits, both good and bad. Identify common triggers for unhealthy eating/snacking (e.g., were you tired? stressed out? etc.).

**Replace** your unhealthy eating habits with healthier ones. For example, you noticed that you eat too fast when you eat alone or are distracted watching TV. Such distractions keep you from paying attention to how quickly and how much you are eating. Replace it by inviting a friend over for dinner once a week or putting your fork down between bites.

**Reinforce** your new, healthier eating habits and be consistent. Also, be kind to yourself. Habits take time to develop. Take one day at a time.

**Adjust** your action plans as needed.

**Goal:** Identify a few triggers you would like to work on improving first. For more tips visit the source page.